Cordillera group blasts BBM: 'The Marcoses never helped us'

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No solid North. A group of Cordillera activists held a protest in front of the deformed Marcos bust during the fifth anniversary of the late dictator's burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani. (Source: Cordillera People's Alliance/Twitter)

Cordillera-based progressive group Tongtongan ti Umili (People's Forum), the Baguio chapter of Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), condemned the recent statement of presidential candidate Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., after he claimed that indigenous people benefited from his dictator father's regime.

"The Marcoses never helped us IPs (indigenous peoples) in any way or form. Marcos Jr. should stop parroting this bogus narrative. He should stop riding on the gimmicks of traditional and corrupt politicians in the region who are obviously on the bandwagon to gain more votes," Tongtongan chairperson Geraldine Cacho said.

In a report by Rappler, Marcos Jr.'s statement came after a December 21 visit to Marcos Village in Mabalacat, Pampanga, where he distributed gifts to Aeta children.

"You must remember the benefits we're giving indigenous Filipinos – *mga una nating Pilipino na matagal na nating tinutulungan* (the first Filipinos whom we've always been helping) – started with the time of my father," Marcos said.

Cacho explained that the late dictator Marcos Sr. was responsible for the destruction of lands and killings of the Cordillera people.

"He can not say that they've been helping IPs (indigenous peoples) since his father's time, since history and facts will tell that the elder Marcos only brought destruction upon our ancestral lands." she said.

"We shall never forget his father's legacy of plunder and killings in the Cordillera during the height of the struggles against the Chico Dams in Bontoc and Kalinga, Cellophil in Abra, the Batongbuhay Mines in Kalinga, and so on."

She also cited a recent interview, when Marcos Jr. said that IPs should not be categorized separately.

"That alone shows blatant disrespect and disregard of our distinct identities and struggles," Cacho told Yahoo Philippines. "How can Marcos Jr. champion indigenous peoples when he himself obviously shows a lack of knowledge about us?"

Mark Ernest Famatigan is a news writer who focuses on Philippine politics. He is an advocate for press freedom and regularly follows developments the Philippine economy. The views expressed are his own.